

**TO: APA California Chapter Board**

**FROM Greg Konar, AICP, Vice President for Marketing and Membership**

**DATE: APA California Chapter Retreat, January 2016**

**SUBJECT: Distance Education Webinars and Session Recordings – Update**

Background

The current APA California Distance Education Program was initiated in 2014. A key objective of the program was to offer CM credit opportunities for AICP members unable to attend the Chapter conference. Video recordings of several live sessions were made at the 2014 Anaheim Conference and the 2015 Oakland Conference. Registration information is summarized in the following table.

**APA California Distance Education Registrations as of 12-17-15**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Session** | **Registrations** | **Release Date** |
| **2014 Anaheim Conference** |
| Doing the Right Thing: Ethical Practices for a Diverse Population CM | 1.5 Ethics | 39 | 10/10/2014 |
| Show Me the Water: Demonstrating Water Supplies for New Development in a Drought Era CM | 1.5 | 12 | 5/14/2015 |
| Implementing Smart Growth Through Zoning: Where the Rubber Meets the Road CM | 1.5 | 4 | 5/14/2015 |
| Outreach to the Silent Majority CM | 1.5 | 9 | 5/14/2015 |
| Ethics and Conflict of Interest in the Land Use Approval Process CM | 1.5 Law | 22 | 2/1/2015 |
| Successful Strategies for Financing Infill Development CM | 1.5 | 10 | 2/1/2015 |
| **2015 Oakland Conference** |
| APA California 2014 Legislative Update CM | 1.5 Law | 29 | 11/4/2015 |
| Latino Urbanism CM | 1.0 | 4 | 11/6/2015 |
| Diversity Summit: Gentrification Mosaic CM | 1.5 |  | Planned 1/2016  |
| Fixing Up Your Project: Strategies and Tools for Revising and Retooling Previously Approved Projects CM | 1.25 Law |  | Planned 1/2016 |
| General Plan Update – Keeping It Real CM | 1.5 |  | Planned 1/2016  |
| Manifest Density: A Reality Check for the Sustainable Communities Strategy CM | 1.5 |  | Planned 1/2016  |
| Parking and Driverless Vehicle Innovations CM | 1.5 |  | Planned 1/2016  |
| **Total** | **129** |  |

Eight distance education videos were released in 2014-2015. Five additional videos are planned for release in January 2016. As of December 17, 2015, the Chapter had received 129 registrations for distance education viewing.

Ninety-six registrations were received for the six 2014 Conference videos. Of these, 57% (55) were made during the last quarter of 2015. The renewed interest in the 2014 Conference videos is likely due to Chapter announcements for the 2015 Conference videos in November 2015 and the approaching year end CM credit reporting deadline.

The *Latino Urbanism* session video from the 2015 Conference was offered for immediate (1-click) viewing at no cost. All other videos require registration and payment before viewing. As of December 17, 2015 the *Latino Urbanism* video had received the highest number of Youtube views (not registrations) of any session video offered (122). The next highest number of Youtube views was for the *2015 Legislative Update* session (50).

Marketing Recommendations

Based on experience gained, the following recommendations are offered to improve marketing of distance education products:

* Create a more attractive and recognizable email format for Chapter announcements.
* Increase the frequency of Chapter announcements.
* Offer on-demand free previews of all videos so members can see what is being offered before registering and paying.
* Market to everyone on the Chapter e-mail list, not just AICP members.
* Encourage Sections to announce the availability of the videos in at least one email blast per quarter. The announcement should be provided by the Chapter ready to be inserted into the Section email blasts.
* Use promotional offers such as discount codes and free viewings to familiarize members with distance education products.

2014 Recording Experience

An initial goal of the Chapter distance education program was to utilize a webinar service for both live webinars and conference recordings. A webinar service was used for the 2014 conference recordings but due to technical problems the files produced were not playable. Fortunately, audio recordings were salvaged from the recorded webinar files and these were combined with PowerPoint slides to make playable videos. It should be noted that Chapter sponsored webinars have been successful where corporate sponsors have allowed sharing of existing webinar service accounts and technical support.

2015 Recording Experience

A laptop equipped with screen capture software was used to record both audio and video. Video was added using two USB cameras. The system is capable of integrating PowerPoint slides but the required HDMI compatible projection equipment was not available in the recording room. PowerPoint slides were added later in post-production. Overall, the recording went smoothly albeit with ample room for improvement. All 2015 recordings have been edited and uploaded to unlisted Youtube addresses.

Looking ahead, the same recording technology used for the 2015 conference will permit video streaming of live events. With additional recording experience, the Chapter may want to experiment with livestream broadcasting. A livestream broadcast has the potential to replace the webinar format, offering higher quality at a much lower cost.

Lessons learned:

* The computer industry is in the process of moving from VGA (analog) video output to HDMI (digital) video output. Newer laptops use HDMI while older laptops use VGA. For future conferences, an HDMI capable laptop and HDMI projector needs to be available in any room where recording is to be done. Moving to HDMI will allow the PowerPoint slides to be fed directly into the video, greatly reducing the need for post-production editing.
* AV personal must be available and able to respond quickly--at any time during the session. Despite careful planning, problems with audio, cable and laptop incompatibility can occur.
* Lighting and backgrounds are important to video quality. Enhanced lighting and attractive backdrops should be considered for lecterns and panel tables.

Summary

The distance education program is a work in progress. The response has been significant but certainly below initial projections. Registrations are likely to grow over time with improved marketing and better product quality. New technology is lowering costs and decreasing risks for experimentation.

Recommendations for 2016:

* Continue distance education program incorporating lessons learned.
* Implement marketing recommendations (above).
* Build competence at creating integrated audio, video, and PowerPoint recordings of Chapter events.
* Experiment with livestreaming for at least one educational event at the 2016 Chapter Conference.
* Use new technology to reduce overall program costs.
* Analyze registration data to better match video production with demand.
* Provide support to Sections interested in providing distance education options.